

10 December 1982

MEMORANDUM FOR: Chairman, National Intelligence Council

FROM: Maurice C. Ernst, NIO/Econ

SUBJECT: Critique of NIEs

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I will ignore the silliness and try to be constructive.

Concept Papers and TORs

It is obviously desirable to have as clear a view of the purpose of the Estimate before it is launched. This means doing a serious Concept Paper, not preparing a wish list. Although the views of NFIB principals, as well as the DCI's, should be heard the main input has to come from people who are familiar with both the issues and the estimative process. Obviously, C/NIC and the SRP have a big role to play at this stage.

Collection Tasking

NIEs cannot and should not drive collection tasking, but can be the occasion to review selectively the adequacy of requirements. The scheduling of an NIE would be a good time to perform this review, although not all NIE topics require any overriding collection priorities. In any event, country-oriented NIEs usually benefit from estimative inputs from the Embassy and/or Station. Such an approach has been used successfully many times in the past and should be continued or expanded.

Improved NSA and DIA Representation

I know too little about this to make an intelligent comment, but

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may be partly right. The military agencies often send professional NIE-goers who are not able to make much of a personal contribution.

Anarchy and Unevenness

Greater uniformity of NIEs would not be a virtue--they are, and should be, very different. I do agree that clearer general standards, for different classes of Estimates, would be useful--with regard to length, handling of Key Judgments, supporting material, etc. With regard to the role of C/NIC the key question is whether the Director wants to deal directly with the individual NIOs or through the C/NIC on objectives, substance, and quality of NIEs. It seems to me that the C/NIC does as much planning, intellectual stimulation, synthesizing, and review of Estimates as is feasible, given the informality of the present system. A tighter system of review could be developed, but in my view not without damaging the direct informal contacts the individual NIOs now have with the DCI. Given the usefulness of these contacts to both parties, and the experience and senior rank of the NIOs, C/NIC should not have to take the same degree of personal responsibility for all aspects of NIEs as would a line manager in the DDI for one of the papers from his unit.

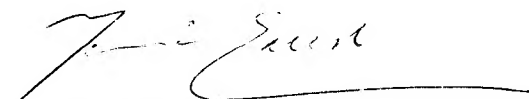
Role of the SRP

Yes indeed, the SRP should be used as a resource by the NIOs, and others. This may reduce its ability to operate as an independent reviewer for the DCI, but in my view, that is a price worth paying. Waiting until the last stages of an NIE's production to get SRP comments is an inefficient use of resources. Creative ideas should be sought early in the process; they may not easily fit in at the late stages, and there may be too little

time.

Making NIEs More Readable

Absolutely. There have always been those who want NIEs to read and look like articles in Foreign Affairs. Although popularization can be dangerous, there is no reason why better format, effective graphics, maps, and charts should not be used. Many DDI products are better in this respect.



Maurice C. Ernst